

# Saving Maine's Farmland

A Collaborative Action Plan



*Maine Department of Agriculture, Food & Rural Resources  
June 2003*



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & RURAL RESOURCES  
**DIVISION OF MARKET AND PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT**  
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John Elias Baldacci  
GOVERNOR

Robert W. Spear  
COMMISSIONER

To the Citizens of Maine:

I am pleased to present *Saving Maine's Farmland: A Collaborative Action Plan*. This timely and far-reaching plan to protect Maine farmland and sustain Maine's many agricultural communities is the result of a process that has brought nearly 100 stakeholders together with representatives of numerous state and federal agencies.

The need for a comprehensive, state-sponsored action plan emerged in the fall of 2000, when the Department began sponsoring farmland for protection through the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMFP). The LMFP Board asked the Department for guidance in directing public investment to those farms and communities having the greatest impact on the future of Maine agriculture. With a grant from the Maine State Planning Office, the Department contracted *American Farmland Trust* to help us develop strategies best suited for farmland protection in Maine. A two-year policy study and planning process was initiated in April, 2001, when farmers, agricultural service providers, educators, business professionals, land-trust members, researchers, conservationists, and federal and state policy-makers convened in Augusta to identify the

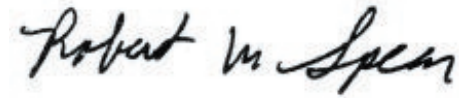
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challenges facing Maine agriculture. Reaffirming that the best way to protect farmland in Maine is to keep Maine farms working, *Saving Maine's Farmland* outlines principles, goals and actions that connect farmland protection to community planning.

Farming requires successful stewardship of many resources, especially the web of relationships between farmers and the communities they serve. *Saving Maine's Farmland* is based on the belief that agricultural viability depends as much upon community cooperation and active interest as productive cropland and sustainable farming practices. *Successful farmland protection in Maine will occur wherever there are successful collaborative relationships between communities and farmers.*

This plan is well suited for Maine's current fiscal challenges because it coordinates the resources of existing agencies and organizations while encouraging new partnerships of private, civic and business interests. As Maine's Commissioner of Agriculture, I pledge my leadership and the resources of the Department to facilitate collaboration between *all* partners to achieve the goals outlined in this plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert W. Spear". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert W. Spear  
Maine Commissioner of Agriculture

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# THE BENEFITS OF SAVING MAINE'S FARMS AND FARMLAND

The Maine family farm is one of the most recognizable icons of America's cultural heritage. As much as Maine farms may vary in personality and purpose, they all share something essential because they embody values derived from working the land, values that touch all sorts of different people. For travelers and visitors to rural Maine, farms are picturesque reminders of the rustic qualities of country living. For neighbors, farms embody the character of home. For local service providers and merchants, farms play important roles in yet another community of partnerships. Protecting Maine's farms and farmland means sustaining a complex web of relationships that connects farmers to people in every aspect of life in Maine, as the following descriptions demonstrate.

## ECONOMIC

Maine's agricultural producers and processors contribute over 1.2 billion dollars to Maine's economy annually.

Maine's agricultural industry employs 65,000 people.

Agriculture is one of the primary forms of wealth creation and economic development. It is a powerful business sector, which embodies Maine's entrepreneurial spirit at every scale.

## ***Fiscal Benefits***

The average Maine farm size is 200 acres. Farmland contributes more in local property taxes than it requires in municipal services. Because cows don't go to school and annual row crops don't require municipal sewer systems, farmland generates tax revenue for towns that offset the cost of providing residential services such as education, roads, utilities, and emergency health and safety services. National data shows that for every dollar of tax revenue collected, farmland produces an average surplus of \$.64. Residential uses consistently cost more than the revenue they produce, requiring an average of \$1.15 in municipal services for every dollar paid in taxes.

## ***Goods and Services***

Maine farms produce fresh vegetables, fruits and berries, potatoes, grains, milk, eggs, meat, herbs, fiber, maple syrup, Christmas trees, bedding and nursery stock, compost and fuels.

Farms purchase local supplies and services, supporting mechanics, merchants, feed and equipment dealers, and fuel suppliers. Farms also hire local labor.

## ***Tourism***

Maine farms are integral to the state's tourism industry, providing year round opportunities for family outings like autumn apple picking, winter cross-country skiing and snowmobiling, spring sugaring and bird watching, and summertime farm stands, berry picking and farmers' markets.

Maine farmers manage thousands of acres of hay and cropland that they own and lease creating much of the open, scenic countryside and rural character that draws tourists to Maine.

# ENVIRONMENTAL

## *Clean Water and Air*

Well managed farmland protects soil, air and water resources – preventing flooding, absorbing carbon, providing groundwater recharge and producing oxygen. Maine’s 700,000 acres of farm woodlots also slow and filter storm water run-off before it flows into streams, rivers and underground aquifers.

## *Fish and Wildlife Habitat*

Field hedgerows, ponds, wetlands and woodlands on Maine farms provide habitat for a diverse array of wildlife. Farm ponds and streams serve as breeding waters for a variety of fish and wildfowl.

# AESTHETIC

## *Open Space*

The rural landscape provides a sense of peace and tranquility in contrast to crowded, hectic urban and sub-urban areas. Maine’s back roads offer travelers some of New England’s finest scenery.

## *Recreation*

Where Maine farmers permit public access, Maine’s cropland, forestland, streams and ponds provide

excellent hunting and fishing. Farmers also open their property seasonally to hikers, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, horseback riders, nature lovers and photographers.

Each year in March and July more than two hundred farmers welcome neighbors and tourists onto their farms for *Maine Maple Sunday* and *Open Farm Day*. Visitors experience Maine's agricultural heritage first-hand, learning how maple sugaring is done, how farm animals are raised and how crops are grown.

## **HERITAGE**

### ***Local History and Legacy***

Many of Maine's very first settlers were farmers. Historic farmhouses, barns and the mosaic of farm fields provide a window into our agricultural history. Farmers today have both a historical understanding of the science and art of farming – the flow of the seasons and the science of soils and climate – as well as the advantage of modernized methods and technologies.

Farms give our Maine communities continuity and extra stability because farm families “put down roots” to allow successive generations to steward the land and grow the family business.



# INTRODUCTION

## ***Background***

The development of *Saving Maine's Farmland: A Collaborative Action Plan* began in April of 2001 with a meeting of state and federal agency representatives and stakeholders from various constituencies of Maine agricultural, policy, commercial, and private interest groups. This discussion, facilitated by American Farmland Trust, identified critical issues facing farms and farmland in Maine in the coming decade. Following this meeting, the Commissioner of Agriculture invited twenty participants to serve on a steering committee charged with developing a bold, comprehensive, proactive plan for protecting Maine's farmland and sustaining its agricultural communities. The steering committee met regularly for six months to generate strategies and draft a plan. During the following 18 months, the Department worked to further develop and refine this plan, including taking initial actions with respect to education, outreach, policy and development of farmland protection proposals for the Land for Maine's Future Program. In February of 2003, an ad hoc committee of administrators from key Maine agricultural agencies and organizations met to clarify and prioritize each action called for in the plan and to determine their own roles in collaborating in these actions. This ad hoc committee will continue to perform a significant collaborative role in the implementation of the plan.

## ***Who is this plan for?***

*Saving Maine's Farmland* is a strategic plan for the Department's farmland protection program. It is also a guide to coordinate the efforts of local, state and federal agency and private organizational partners to assist farmers and farm families, town and regional governmental entities, and educators,

researchers, and policy strategists with farmland protection. Ultimately, *Saving Maine's Farmland* aims to assist Maine citizens to find their way into the dialogue and collaborative action to protect farmland at the local level.

### ***What information supports this plan?***

*Saving Maine's Farmland* is not a statistical analysis of the status of Maine's agricultural industry; nor is it a formal quantitative report on the loss of farmland in Maine. Rather, it is a set of credible recommendations for saving and stewarding Maine's agricultural resources for the years ahead. These recommendations are based upon the experience, knowledge and resources of the following contributors:

**Agricultural Council of Maine**  
**American Farmland Trust**  
**Coastal Enterprises Inc.**  
**Land for Maine's Future Program**  
**Maine Agricultural Center**  
**Maine Association of Conservation Districts**  
**Maine Coast Heritage Trust**  
**Maine Farm Bureau**  
**Maine Farmland Trust**  
**Maine FarmLink**  
**Maine Department of Agriculture**  
**Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association**

**Maine State Grange**  
**Maine State Planning Office**  
**McDougal Orchards**  
**River Rise Farm**  
**Unity Barn Raisers**  
**University of Maine Cooperative Extension,**  
**University of Southern Maine – Muskie School for**  
**Public Policy**  
**USDA Farm Service Agency**  
**USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service**  
**USDA Time and Tide - Resource Conservation &**  
**Development Council**

The recommendations in this collaborative action plan follow a logical progression from one overarching mission statement with nine core principles to a set of six goals with prescribed actions. Brief descriptions of each action identify the target audience and timeline as well as the collaborative partners willing to share a lead or supporting role in carrying out the action.

Other sections in this report provide information about existing and emerging policies and programs needed to sustain a working agricultural landscape.

### ***How will the Department engage additional partners?***

The Department will present *Saving Maine's Farmland: A Collaborative Action Plan* to the Governor's Office and members of the 121st Legislature. Copies will also be distributed statewide to agricultural, conservation, municipal and land use planning agencies and organizations. Additional efforts to engage partners are identified in the Table of Actions.

The Department will convene ad hoc advisory committee meetings twice a year, in October and February, to review progress and update the action plan with collaborating partners. Following the February meeting, the Department will publish and distribute a written progress report to the Governor, the Legislature, and key groups in each target audience.

## MISSION

*To protect currently active and potentially productive farmland as a means to sustaining economically viable agricultural communities.*

Farming is more than a business proposition; it provides society with numerous priced and non-priced goods and services; it is a way of life and a source of identity and strength for many of Maine's rural communities. Farmers utilize nutrients and energy efficiently and effectively to grow healthy food and fiber, to protect air and water quality and to provide wildlife habitat. Their livelihood forms a landscape that is the "fabric" of many Maine villages and towns. Maine's farms contribute to rural character, quality of life and many local resource-based economies. Even in those communities where farming is not the predominant livelihood, citizens are continually reaping the benefits of Maine's agricultural legacy as they enjoy aesthetically appealing scenic views, open, undeveloped space and outdoor recreation.

Maine's agricultural future is inextricably linked to its ability to continue to build strong, long-lasting connections between farmers and the communities they serve. Generations of Maine's citizens will need to work together to find ways to keep farmland in the hands of farmers committed to sustaining Maine's agriculture. This idea is the cornerstone of our broad-based, long-range and community-minded farmland protection action plan.

## CORE PRINCIPLES

Maine's farmers, community planners, researchers, government leaders and citizens must work together to address the following nine core principles when undertaking future actions:

- Farmers are stewards of Maine's rural working landscape.
- Agriculture provides broad benefits – economic, social and environmental - to Maine's communities.
- Agriculture must be actively supported by long-term strategies and public policies.
- Prime, significant and unique farmland soils are a non-renewable resource that must be protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- Agriculture should be considered the highest and best use of high quality farmland.
- Farm income should be on par with other local businesses.
- Farmers need assistance with business planning, market development, farm transfer and retirement planning.
- A healthy and sustainable agricultural industry requires a steady influx of new generations of farmers.
- Active stakeholder relationships at community, regional and statewide levels are necessary to accomplish our Mission.

## GOALS

Successful protection of Maine farms and farmland will require the Department of Agriculture and its collaborative partners to work toward the following goals.

1. **Expand Maine’s farmland protection program and increase its effectiveness through outreach and education.**
2. **Assemble local and state leadership and public support for Maine agriculture and develop farmland protection tools and programs that fortify current and future generations of Maine farmers.**
3. **Increase local capacity to promote agricultural viability, protect farmland and sustain agricultural communities.**
4. **Integrate farmland protection and agricultural viability policy and planning efforts with the work of all pertinent state agencies.**
5. **Raise the financial resources needed to fund an array of agricultural viability and farmland protection programs to help Maine farms, farmers and communities keep Maine agriculture growing.**
6. **Support the continued productivity, security, health and well being of Maine farmers and farm families.**

Achieving these specific goals will depend upon actions carried out by diverse participants and stakeholders. The following table illustrates the opportunity for collaboration between the many members of Maine’s agricultural community and the people it serves in cities and towns around the state. A key identifying active and potential collaborators is appended to the table.

<p>The Dept of Agriculture and its partners will take the following actions to address the mission, core principles and goals.</p>	<p>TARGET AUDIENCE Farmers and Farm Families</p>	<p>TARGET AUDIENCE Community, Town &amp; Regional Entities</p>	<p>TARGET AUDIENCE Educators, Researchers &amp; Policy Strategists</p>
<p><b>GOAL ONE</b></p> <p><b>Expand Maine's farmland protection program and increase its effectiveness through outreach and education.</b></p> <p>★ <b>Priority Action</b></p> <p>! <b>Ongoing activity that <u>directly addresses</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p>+ <b>Ongoing activity that <u>secondarily supports</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p><small>BOLD INDICATES LEAD ENTITY</small></p>	<p>★ ! <b>DAFRR</b> to update and distribute a farmer's planning guide to the Farm and Open Space Tax Program.</p> <p>Stage 1: Produce 1-page update for farmers Stage 2: Gather &amp; analyze data to improve program. Entities that will help with gathering &amp; analyzing the information: <b>DAFRR –FPP</b>. Entities that will help with distributing the information: <b>MACD, UMCE, SPO, MFB</b>.</p> <p>! <b>2003</b> Write and distribute a series of fact sheets about "How To Protect Your Family Farm," Maine's agricultural support programs and farmland protection tools: <b>DAFRR- FPP, UMCE, MFT, FL, CEI</b>.</p> <p>! <b>2004</b> Conduct a series of ATM workshops about options for fiscal solvency, downsizing, retirement and transferring the farm: <b>DAFRR-FPP, CEI, UMCE, MACD</b>.</p> <p>! Conduct informational meetings about "Planning To Protect Your Farm," at the Ag Trade Show and in farming communities: <b>DAFRR-FPP, UMCE , FL, CEI</b>.</p> <p>! Identify and sponsor farms seeking to sell development rights in exchange for granting perpetual Agricultural Conservation Easements <b>DAFRR-FPP, CEI, LMF, MFT</b>.</p> <p>+ Attend Maine Association of Conservation District's Summer &amp; Winter Meetings. <b>DAFRR-Commissioner</b>,</p> <p>+ Co-sponsor and provide workshop at Maine Farmland Trust's Annual <i>Farmland Forum</i> <b>DAFRR-Commissioner, MFT, FL, MFB, MSG.</b></p>	<p>★ ! Develop a comprehensive food policy and action plan for the state of Maine (Not updated since 1985) (Millennium Report on Food Security): <b>DAFRR Commissioner, SPO, MSG</b>.</p> <p>★ + Continue to implement recommendations made by the Agricultural Vitality Task Force to increase consumption of locally grown products, support farmer's markets and strengthen existing related programs: <b>DAFRR –Commissioner and M&amp;PD</b>.</p> <p>! Provide technical assistance with farmland protection to Maine Land Trust Network: <b>DAFRR-FPP, LMF, MFT, CEI</b>.</p> <p>! Provide Agricultural Census Data, resource information and technical assistance to towns seeking to protect farms and farmland: <b>DAFRR-FPP, NENASS</b>.</p> <p>! Regularly inform the media about successful Farmland Protection Projects funded through the Land for Maine's Future and Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Programs: <b>DAFRR-FPP, SPO, MFT, MFB</b>.</p> <p>! Work with the State Planning Office, USDA, MEGIS and other partners to provide resource packages and technical assistance to municipal comprehensive planning committees, provide linkages with farmers and land trusts, review draft plans and ordinances, and assist with implementing farmland protection agendas: <b>DAFRR-FPP, SPO, MEGIS</b>.</p> <p>+ <b>2003</b> Work with the Northern Maine Development Commission NMDC, Maine Municipal Association MMA and Maine Association of Real Estate Brokers to distribute a handbook to help potential rural property buyers better understand the differences and pleasures of country living: <b>DAFRR -M&amp;PD</b>.</p> <p>+ Develop and distribute promotional / educational materials, and sponsor special events to increase public appreciation of Maine's working farms: <b>DAFRR-M&amp;PD, MFT, UMCE, MAC</b>.</p>	<p>★ ! Distribute the Department's 2002 Biennial Report and <i>Saving Maine's Farmland: A Collaborative Action Plan</i> to UMCE, MAC, USM- Muskie School other research entities: <b>DAFRR</b>.</p> <p>★ ! Meet with researchers, professors, educators, appraisers and other professionals to draft a summary of farmland protection research needs. Implement recommendations from UM Report by Jesse Gandy into comprehensive food policy and action plan: <b>DAFRR Commissioner, FPP, AFT, SPO, LMF, MAC</b>.</p> <p>★ ! Provide researchers, within the University of Maine System with information about existing programs: <b>DAFRR, UMCE, MAC, CEI</b>.</p> <p>+ <b>2003</b> Participate in MACD Envirothon <b>DAFRR, MFT, MFB</b>.</p> <p>+ <b>2003</b> Write Maine-specific lesson plans about farmland protection for <i>Project Food, Land and People</i> Maine Agriculture in the Classroom's K-12 curriculum, distribute to all public, private and home schools: <b>MAITCA, DAFRR, UMCE, MFB</b>.</p> <p>+ Provide articles about Maine agriculture and farmland protection through newsletters and publications produced by other agencies and organizations <b>DAFRR, MFB, UMCE, MFT, FL, CEI, MSG</b>.</p>

<p><b>GOAL TWO</b></p> <p><b>Assemble local and state leadership and public support for Maine agriculture and develop farmland protection tools and programs that fortify current and future generations of Maine farmers.</b></p> <p>★ <b>Priority Action</b></p> <p>! <b>Ongoing activity that <u>directly addresses</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p>+ <b>Ongoing activity that <u>secondarily supports</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p><small>BOLD INDICATES LEAD ENTITY</small></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Farmers and Farm Families</b></p> <p>★ <b>! Commissioner of Agriculture will provide</b> regular updates on the Department's Farmland Protection Program to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members, Agricultural Council of Maine</li> <li>Supervisors &amp; Staff, Maine Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts</li> <li>Directors, Maine Farm Bureau</li> <li>County Committee Members, USDA Farm Service Agency</li> <li>County Executive Committee Members, University of Maine Cooperative Extension</li> <li>Administration, University of Maine Cooperative Extension</li> <li>Administration, USDA Agencies</li> <li>Board Members, Local Land Trusts</li> </ul> <p>+ <b>2003</b> Encourage stakeholders to draft and endorse a "Declaration of Intent," to incorporate this Mission into all entities' plans of work, thereby building strong, long-lasting connections between Maine farmers and the communities they serve: <b>DAFRR, MFT.</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Community, Town &amp; Regional Entities</b></p> <p>★ <b>!</b> Distribute <i>Saving Maine's Farmland</i>, the Dept. of Agriculture's 2002 Biennial Report and the <i>Maine Food and Farms Resource Guide</i> to Regional Economic Development Offices, Small Business Development Centers, municipal officials and planning boards as well as citizen-planner and conservation groups: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MSG.</b></p> <p>★ <b>!</b> Work with the State Planning Office, USDA, MEGIS and other partners to provide resource packages and technical assistance to municipal comprehensive planning committees, provide linkages with farmers and land trusts, review draft plans and ordinances, and assist with implementing farmland protection agendas: <b>DAFRR-FPP, SPO, MEGIS.</b></p> <p>★ <b>!</b> Strengthen Working Landscapes Model to deliver positive message that agriculture is a critical economic development activity and counter negative messages that "farming is dead." Write case studies of Working Landscapes: <b>DAFRR- M&amp;PD.</b></p> <p>+ <b>2003</b> Encourage stakeholders to draft and endorse a "Declaration of Intent," to incorporate this Mission into all entities' plans of work, thereby building strong, long-lasting connections between Maine farmers and the communities they serve: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MFT.</b></p> <p>! Assist towns that seek to create or have created rural and agricultural priority areas in their Comprehensive Plans: <b>DAFRR, UMCE, SPO, MFT.</b></p> <p>+ Create a consortium of municipal officials and agricultural leaders who are willing to assist the Department with identifying a set of indicators or attributes that can make a town more "agriculture-friendly." Report findings in a series of newspaper articles: <b>UMCE, SPO, MSG.</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Educators, Researchers &amp; Policy Strategists</b></p> <p>★ <b>!</b> Distribute <i>Saving Maine's Farmland</i> and the Dept. of Agriculture's 2002 Biennial Report to the Governor, the 121st Legislature and all Maine Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Partners (see last page of table). Hold a press conference: <b>DAFRR.</b></p> <p>+ <b>2003</b> Encourage stakeholders to draft and endorse a "Declaration of Intent," to incorporate this Mission into all entities' plans of work, thereby building strong, long-lasting connections between Maine farmers and the communities they serve: <b>DAFRR, SPO, UMCE, CEI.</b></p> <p>+ Work with farmers, Legislators, agricultural leaders and DAFRR staff to formulate a legislative agenda that supports Maine agriculture and protects Maine farmland: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MFB, CEI.</b></p> <p>! Assist Maine Farmland Trust and its collaborators with producing and promoting Farmland Forum events: <b>MFT, DAFRR, SPO, LMF, MFT, FL, MFB, MSG.</b></p> <p>! Provide annual farmland protection status reports to the Governor; the State Legislature; State Agencies; LMF Board: farmer-member groups such as the Maine Farm Bureau and the Association of Maine Granges; USDA Agricultural Agencies; Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Municipalities; and local conservation and land-use planning groups: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MSG.</b></p>
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## GOAL THREE

**Increase local capacity to promote agricultural viability, protect farmland and sustain agricultural communities.**

### ★ Priority Action

! Ongoing activity that directly addresses farmland protection.

+ Ongoing activity that secondarily supports farmland protection.

BOLD INDICATES LEAD ENTITY

## TARGET AUDIENCE

### Farmers and Farm Families

★! Use the "Train the Trainer Model" to train more agricultural service providers about farmland protection: **DAFRR-FPP**.

! Assist farmers with planning how to protect leased land and further engage their communities to identify strategies and priorities for sustaining agriculture and protecting farmland. **DAFRR, MFT, CEI**.

! Create and distribute farmer-friendly fact sheets about Maine's Homestead Exemption, the Farmland and Open Space Tax Law, the Tree Growth Tax Law, the Maine Forest Stewardship Program and the Forest Management Planning Tax Credit: **DAFRR, SPO, MRS, DOC, MFT, FL, MFB**.

! Use farmland protection projects funded through the Land for Maine's Future Program and the USDA Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program to demonstrate why and how farmers can work with their communities to protect farmland: **DAFRR, SPO, NRCS, MFT, MFB**.

★! Learn from existing models to strengthen what is already working. For example: a) provide access to information in mini-regions using the Small Farm Conference model; b) use the Farms for the Future model of advisory teams, and; c) assign staff person to learn what farmers need and facilitate use of technical assistance and on-farm research: **DAFRR, MFT, FL, UMCE, MAC, MFB**.

+ Continue to provide guidance on farm stands, farmers markets, consumer supported agriculture, pick-your-own operations, farm tours and seasonal special events that can increase farm sale and simultaneously build consumer support for Maine agriculture: **DAFRR, UMCE**.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

### Community, Town & Regional Entities

+ Work with state, regional and community economic development groups to better utilize USDA Rural Development funds that can be used to target agricultural business development opportunities for Maine's farmers and rural communities: **DAFRR Commissioner**

! Help communities learn more about community stewardship of farms and farmland. Provide case study descriptions of how other communities – in Maine and in other States - are successfully protecting farmland: **DAFRR, SPO, MFT, MFB, CEI, MSG**.

! Assist local governmental and non-governmental entities with applying for Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program funds: **DAFRR, MFT**.

! Demonstrate why and how farmers can work with their communities to protect farmland: **DAFRR, UMCE, MFT, MFB**.

+ Work with SPO to identify those towns that have enacted additional voluntary or regulatory measures that promote agriculture and protect farmland. Share exemplary language with other towns interested in farmland protection: **SPO**.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

### Educators, Researchers & Policy Strategists

! **2003** Write stewardship guidelines for Agricultural Conservation Easements acquired through the Land for Maine's Future Program and USDA Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program: **DAFRR, MFT, NRCS, DOC**.

! **2003** Work with Dept. of Conservation to build stewardship endowment at Maine Community Foundation. Identify the costs and benefits of contracting with local land trusts interested in managing the stewardship of state held agricultural easements: **DAFRR, DOC**.

+ Review all Legislative dockets in order to better guide policies and programs that will sustain agriculture and protect farmers, farms and farmland: **DAFRR, MFB, MFT, CEI**.

+ Improve the State's agricultural database and statistical information services, working with USDA – NENASS and MEGIS to get prime farmland and active farm information into the Maine Geo-Library: **DAFRR, NENASS, MEGIS, SPO, CEI**.

<p><b>GOAL FOUR</b></p> <p><b>Integrate farmland protection and agricultural viability policy and planning efforts with the work of all pertinent state agencies.</b></p> <p>★ <b>Priority Action</b></p> <p>! <b>Ongoing activity that <u>directly addresses</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p>+ <b>Ongoing activity that <u>secondarily supports</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p><small>BOLD INDICATES LEAD ENTITY</small></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Farmers and Farm Families</b></p> <p>★ I Create a system to track and monitor success of farmers enrolled in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business support programs</li> <li>• Farmland protection projects</li> <li>• Differential taxation programs</li> <li>• Long-term lease agreements</li> <li>• Technical assistance programs</li> </ul> <p><b>DAFRR, CEI.</b></p> <p>+ Better inform all state agencies about how agriculture benefits all of Maine's citizens: <b>DAFRR, MFB, UMCE, CEI, MSG.</b></p> <p>+ Conduct research to establish new direct markets in communities and regions: <b>DAFRR, UMCE, DECD.</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Community, Town &amp; Regional Entities</b></p> <p>★ I Identify what is/is not working:</p> <p>A) Join with State Planning Office to fine-tune technical assistance and annual professional development / training opportunities for towns and communities interested in managing growth to sustain agriculture and protect farmland: <b>DAFRR, SPO.</b></p> <p>B) Convene Farmers, Selectmen and local Assessors in different communities to identify what is preventing the Farm and Open Space Tax Program from being as successful as the Tree Growth Program to reduce farmer's tax burden, keep land in productive management and curtail costs of community services: <b>DAFRR, MFT, MFB.</b></p> <p>! Identify towns that have enacted additional voluntary or regulatory measures that promote agriculture and protect farmland. Share exemplary language with other towns interested in farmland protection: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MFT.</b></p> <p>! Provide technical assistance and annual professional development / training opportunities to community organizers, agricultural and land trust professionals, town officials and private consultants to ensure that growth management planning includes farmland protection projects: <b>DAFRR, SPO, DECD, MFT, MSG.</b></p> <p>+ Assist Maine State Planning Office with formulating and recommending subdivision design and performance standards that prevent encroachment on farms and farmland: <b>DAFRR, SPO, CEI.</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Educators, Researchers &amp; Policy Strategists</b></p> <p>+ Work with Maine State Planning Office, Maine Revenue Service, University of Maine and Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station researchers and USDA Farm Service Agency to determine the current use costs associated with different types of farmland: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MRS, FSA, UMCE, MAC.</b></p> <p>+ Report an update to the Valuations Guidelines of the Farm and Open Space Tax Program to the Legislature: <b>DAFRR, MRS, SPO.</b></p> <p>+ Initiate research and further actions to support recommendations made by the Agricultural Vitality Task Force: <b>DAFRR, MAC.</b></p> <p>+ Research potential for administration and renewal of Maine's Farmland Registration Act, (also known as Farmland Adjacency Act) as soon as farmland and parcel data are available in Maine Geo-Library: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MEGIS.</b></p> <p>+ Support and assist research efforts of the University of Maine, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment and the private sector related to Maine's farming, fishing and forestry and rural economic and community development: <b>DAFRR, UMCE.</b></p>
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<p><b>GOAL FIVE</b></p> <p><b>Raise the financial resources needed to fund an array of agricultural viability and farmland protection programs to help Maine farms, farmers and communities keep Maine agriculture growing.</b></p> <p>★ <b>Priority Action</b></p> <p>! <b>Ongoing activity that <u>directly addresses</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p>+ <b>Ongoing activity that <u>secondarily supports</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p><small>BOLD INDICATES LEAD ENTITY</small></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Farmers and Farm Families</b></p> <p>★ ! Investigate ways that any future LMFP Bond can remove disincentives to the sale of development rights: <b>DAFRR - FPP</b> to coordinate with LMF, AFT to provide technical expertise.</p> <p>! Develop research and public relations campaign for future LMFP Bond. Modify the statute to improve the farmland protection opportunities and work with farmers to build support for the Bond. <u>Department cannot be leader</u>: MFT, TPL, <b>MCHT, TNC</b>, CEI.</p> <p>! Obtain grant funds to hire an intern to assist with program information dissemination: <b>DAFRR</b>.</p> <p>! Maximize use of Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program. <b>DAFRR – FPP, MFT</b>.</p> <p>! Obtain grant funds needed to strengthen the DAFRR Farmland protection program and sustain Farms for the Future and FarmLink: <b>DAFRR – Commissioner and M&amp;PD, CEI</b>.</p> <p>Request for \$195,000 through the Federal State Market Improvement Program was submitted in Feb. 03. Letters of support from: MAC, UMCE, MFT, Maine Dairy Industry Association, Maine Milk Commission, Heart of Maine RC&amp;D, Time &amp; Tide RC&amp;D. If awarded grant will be administered by <b>DAFRR, CEI</b>.</p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Community, Town &amp; Regional Entities</b></p> <p>★ ! <b>DAFRR Commissioner and FPP</b> leadership and partnership with American Farmland Trust to carry out research that will further develop an “agricultural district” concept for Maine. Farmers would voluntarily enter a “district program” to benefit from agriculture-friendly public policies as well as economic and tax incentives: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MFT</b>.</p> <p>! Convene a committee of municipal, agricultural and agency stakeholders to further explore revenue and financing mechanisms used in other states (i.e. Real Estate Transfer Tax, United States Treasury Bonds to fund Installment Purchase of Easements: <b>DAFRR, SPO</b>.</p> <p>! Convene regional stakeholder groups to identify elements and funding strategies for a statewide, region-specific comprehensive farmland protection program: <b>DAFRR, SPO, MFT, CEI</b>.</p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Educators, Researchers &amp; Policy Strategists</b></p> <p>★ ! Hire an intern to assist with research and program information dissemination: <b>DAFRR</b>,</p> <p>! Convene a committee of researchers and strategists to explore revenue and financing mechanisms used in other states (i.e. Real Estate Transfer Tax, United States Treasury Bonds to fund Installment Purchase of Easements: <b>DAFRR, SPO, LMF</b>.</p>
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<p><b>GOAL SIX</b></p> <p><b>Support the continued productivity, security, health and well-being of Maine farmers and farm families.</b></p> <p>★ <b>Priority Action</b></p> <p>! <b>Ongoing activity that <u>directly addresses</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p>+ <b>Ongoing activity that <u>secondarily supports</u> farmland protection.</b></p> <p><small>BOLD INDICATES LEAD ENTITY</small></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Farmers and Farm Families</b></p> <p>! Establish a grant program to assist farm families with estate and retirement planning: <b>DAFRR, MFB, CEI.</b></p> <p>+ Help farmers gain access to affordable health, liability and property damage/fire insurance: <b>DAFRR.</b></p> <p>+ Increase funding for grant and loan programs that assist farmers with creating low-capital, sustainable production systems: <b>DAFRR.</b></p> <p>+ Assist the next generation of farmers with locating quality farmland and accessing financing opportunities to begin farming in Maine. Promote curricula, educational programs and farmer network groups that assist Maine's next generation of farmers. Create greater connectivity of new farmer training programs at all age levels: 4-H, FFA, Maine Ag in the Classroom Assoc., Maine FarmLink, MOFGA's Journeyperson Program, Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society, Maine Agricultural Center, the Maine Women's Agricultural Network: <b>DAFRR, FL, CEI, UMCE.</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Community, Town &amp; Regional Entities</b></p> <p>! Meet with those private lending institutions that are working with farms to help them better understand Maine's sale of development rights programs: <b>DAFRR.</b></p> <p>+ Identify ways for towns and communities to help farms address labor shortages: <b>DAFRR, UMCE.</b></p> <p>+ Create a promotional campaign to help towns and communities recognize and measure the multiplier effect of agricultural and natural resources based businesses: <b>DAFRR, SPO.</b></p> <p>+ Create a "Century Farms Program," like Massachusetts' program to recognize Maine families who have farmed for 100 years or more: <b>DAFRR</b></p> <p>+ Work with partner agencies and private entities to improve farmers' access to health insurance and retirement planning and funding opportunities: <b>DAFRR.</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> <b>Educators, Researchers &amp; Policy Strategists</b></p> <p>+ Investigate and evaluate programs in the US, Canada and Europe that provide farmers with health insurance. <b>DAFRR,</b></p> <p>+ Measure the need for adaptive technologies on Maine's farms. <b>DAFRR, UMCE</b></p>
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# Maine Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Partners

**BOLD TYPE INDICATES THE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE BEGINNING TO DEVELOP ORGANIZATIONAL CONCEPTS AND MECHANISMS NEEDED FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION. OTHER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS LISTED BELOW WILL BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.**

## STATE AGENCIES

<b>DAFRR</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL RESOURCES</b>
	<b>FPP FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM</b>
	<b>MP&amp;D DIVISION OF MARKET AND PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT</b>
<b>DECD</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</b>
<b>DEP</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>
<b>DMR</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES</b>
<b>DOC</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION</b>
<b>DOL</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF LABOR</b>
<b>FAME</b>	<b>FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE</b>
<b>IFW</b>	<b>INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE</b>
<b>LMF</b>	<b>LAND FOR MAINE'S FUTURE PROGRAM</b>
<b>MDOT</b>	<b>MAINE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION</b>
<b>MEGIS</b>	<b>MAINE GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM</b>
<b>MRS</b>	<b>MAINE STATE REVENUE SERVICE</b>
<b>MSHA</b>	<b>MAINE STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY</b>
<b>SPO</b>	<b>STATE PLANNING OFFICE</b>
	<b>DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS TEAM</b>
	<b>LAND USE PLANNING TEAM</b>

## FEDERAL AGENCIES

<b>FSA</b>	<b>USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY</b>
<b>NENASS</b>	<b>NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL AG STATISTICS</b>
<b>NRCS</b>	<b>USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE</b>
<b>RC&amp;D</b>	<b>USDA NRCS —RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICES</b>
<b>RD</b>	<b>USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT</b>

## RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

<b>UM</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY OF MAINE</b>
<b>USM</b>	<b>USM - MUSKIE SCHOOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT</b>
<b>MAC</b>	<b>MAINE AGRICULTURAL CENTER</b>
<b>MAFES</b>	<b>MAINE AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION</b>
<b>UMCE</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY OF MAINE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION</b>
<b>MRDC</b>	<b>MAINE RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL</b>
<b>MAFES</b>	<b>MAINE AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION</b>
<b>MCWWC</b>	<b>MAINE CENTERS FOR WOMEN, WORK AND THE COMMUNITY</b>
<b>SBDC</b>	<b>SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS</b>

## QUASI-INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

<b>AFT</b>	<b>AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST</b>
<b>AGCOM</b>	<b>AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL OF MAINE</b>
<b>CEI</b>	<b>COASTAL ENTERPRISES, INC.</b>
<b>FL</b>	<b>MAINE FARMLINK</b>
<b>NMCD</b>	<b>NORTHERN MAINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION</b>
<b>MACD</b>	<b>MAINE ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS</b>
<b>MCF</b>	<b>MAINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION</b>
<b>MDF</b>	<b>MAINE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION</b>
<b>MAIC</b>	<b>MAINE AQUACULTURE AND INNOVATION CENTER</b>
<b>MAITCA</b>	<b>MAINE AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM</b>
<b>MAREB</b>	<b>MAINE ASSOCIATION OF REAL ESTATE BROKERS</b>
<b>MCHT</b>	<b>MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST</b>
<b>MESAS</b>	<b>MAINE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE SOCIETY</b>
<b>MFB</b>	<b>MAINE FARM BUREAU</b>
<b>MFT</b>	<b>MAINE FARMLAND TRUST</b>
<b>MLTN</b>	<b>MAINE LAND TRUST NETWORK</b>
<b>MMA</b>	<b>MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION</b>
<b>MOFGA</b>	<b>MAINE ORGANIC FARMERS AND GARDENERS ASSOCIATION</b>
<b>MSG</b>	<b>MAINE STATE GRANGE</b>
<b>TNC</b>	<b>THE NATURE CONSERVANCY</b>
<b>TPL</b>	<b>TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND</b>
<b>WAGN</b>	<b>MAINE WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL NETWORK</b>

(BOLD INDICATES LEAD ENTITY)

# MAINE'S CURRENT FARMLAND PROTECTION TOOLBOX

## Permanent Land Protection

### *Purchase of Development Rights Programs*

The *Land for Maine's Future Program (LMFP)* was enacted in 1987 to acquire land and interests in lands (easements) to protect important conservation areas, water access, outdoor recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and farmland. The program requires a fifty-cent (\$.50) match for every dollar (\$1.00) requested.

The *USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)* provides matching funds to eligible state and local governmental and non-governmental entities who are seeking to purchase development rights on farms and ranches. The program will pay up to fifty percent (50%) of the appraised value of the development rights. It does not pay for real estate transaction costs such as appraisal, survey, title search and other due diligence. Only state and local governmental or non-governmental entities can apply for these funds.

Both the Land for Maine's Future and the USDA Farm and Ranch Land Protection programs assist the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources with protecting farmland for future generations of Maine farmers. The Department works closely with farmers, towns and land trusts to identify those projects that are most likely to receive funding for the purchase of development rights. It guides the planning and application writing processes to sponsor the projects to both funding programs. Once projects are allocated funds they receive ongoing technical assistance from the Department.

When a farm property's development rights are sold they are extinguished through an agricultural conservation easement, or deed restriction, that is granted to the Department, a town or a local land trust. The easement protects all current and future agricultural uses of the land by prohibiting all conflicting non-agricultural uses (i.e. subdivision, housing development, etc.). It also allows farmers the flexibility needed to manage farmland. For example, farmers retain all other rights of ownership; they can sell, lease, continue to farm or diversify their operation, they just can't grow houses. If and when they do sell, their land will be valued as farmland, which often makes it more affordable for the next generation of farmers.

# DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & RURAL RESOURCES

## Permanent Protection Project Criteria

*The Department seeks applicants/projects that are:*

1. Active, working farmland with productive farm assets.
2. Under current and emerging threat of conversion to non-agricultural uses.
3. In close proximity to active and productive farms and agricultural infrastructure.
4. Located in designated and active priority agricultural areas identified in town comprehensive plans that are consistent with the Growth Management Act and where there is some concrete evidence of a town's efforts to implement the objectives of the plan.
5. Developing an estate plan that seeks to transfer the farm to the next generation farmer.
6. Willing to develop financial and written business plans.
7. Selling or distributing their products through local, regional or national markets.
8. Comprised of more than one farm property or are the keystone of a larger future effort to protect additional farmland.
9. Able to demonstrate community support for agricultural, open space, cultural and public benefits.
10. Committed to forming a project planning team that includes a designated "project manager" and other key representatives from agricultural, municipal, conservation and land trust organizations.



## Temporary Land Protection

*Maine's Farm and Open Space Tax Law* was enacted in 1975 to provide property tax relief to owners of farmland and open space. Property enrolled in the program is to be assessed at current use value rather than fair market value. Many landowners need assistance in analyzing their current valuation to determine if this program can provide tax relief.

Local governments administer the program per state guidelines. Although lack of state reimbursement to cover the difference between current use and fair market valuations remains a significant disincentive for many municipalities and towns, in the spring of 2000 the 119<sup>th</sup> Legislature made changes to remove disincentives and increase enrollment.

First, assessors are required to follow stronger guidelines established by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources (DAFRR), Maine Revenue Service and the Legislature's joint standing committee on Taxation to substantiate agricultural land values. These guidelines will be updated during the 2003 – 2004 biennium. The second change stipulates that landowners withdrawing from the program pay a lower penalty - the amount of tax savings provided by the program over the previous five years plus the interest on that amount. The third change makes it possible for farmers to more easily qualify for the farm use classification. Each farm parcel need only contribute to an annual \$2,000 gross income from farming, and either the landowner or a lessee may achieve this income.

The *Maine Tree Growth Tax Law* was enacted to provide property tax relief to owners of woodlots and forestlands. Property enrolled in the program is evaluated and assessed at an established statewide rate for hardwood, softwood and mixed wood stands. Local governments administer the program per state guidelines. Unlike the Farm and Open Space Program, there is a state

reimbursement to cover the difference in tax revenue, which provides an incentive for municipalities and towns to encourage property owners to enroll in this program. This program is very effective for keeping forestlands undeveloped and in productive management.

### **Tax Credits**

The *Forest Management Planning Tax Credit* provides small woodlot owners up to \$200 in tax credits every 10 years to offset the cost of a forest management plan. The Maine Forest Service administers the program.

*Sales Tax Exemptions* eliminate retail sales taxes on electricity for agricultural farming and aquaculture businesses. Administered by the Maine Revenue Service.

### **Land Use Planning**

*Comprehensive Growth Management* was enacted in 1989 and requires local plans to address agricultural land use and provides state agency review of ordinances. The program, administered by the State Planning Office, requires municipal plans to address agricultural, forestry, open space and other resource lands. Also, state agencies review local agricultural and forest management ordinances to improve dialogue between state agencies and local governments. Strengthening local comprehensive plans and encouraging the use of agricultural protection ordinances would place more responsibility for land protection at the local level.

*General Management Zone* was enacted in 1969 to protect agricultural and forestry uses from development in unorganized territory of the state. The General Management Zone (GMZ) is

the primary regulatory district of the State Land Use Regulatory Commission (LURC), which governs land use in unincorporated areas of the state. The GMZ comprises 80 percent of LURC's jurisdiction and some 40 percent of the state. While agricultural land makes up only a small fraction of the GMZ area, the district is noteworthy in that it allows agricultural and forestry management activities without restriction and prohibits residential and commercial subdivision.

Under GMZ, development of a residential or commercial subdivision requires re-zoning an area to become a development sub-district (this is allowed only if an area of development is within one road mile of the proposed site.) A loophole in this rule allows creation of as many as ten 40-acre lots more than ¼ mile from a water body in any five-year period. Despite this exemption, the GMZ is unique among state regulations in that it directly limits development of agricultural and forestry land.

### **Laws that Protect Agricultural Practices**

Enacted in 1981, *Maine's Right to Farm Act* provides legal protection from nuisance lawsuits and local ordinances affecting unreasonable regulation on farms and farmers. In the case of a nuisance complaint, the law enables the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to intervene on a farmer's behalf and determine criteria that establish the farmer's right to farm according to site-specific best management practices.

Enacted in 1989, the *Farmland Registration Act*, also known as the "Adjacency Act," was intended to help protect existing farms from encroaching incompatible uses via disclosure requirements that would alert residential buyers to the existence of agricultural operations. The law was effective at protecting farmers but subsequent changes rendered it inactive.

## Agricultural Business Support Programs

The *Farms for the Future Program* was enacted in 2000 to provide business planning and technical assistance to farmers in exchange for limited-term farmland preservation agreements. Phase I of the program offers farmers financial and technical assistance to develop business. Upon completion of the business planning process, a farmer is eligible to apply for Phase II funding to implement their business plan. As a condition of receiving funding the farmer must enter into farmland protection agreement that prohibits development from five to ten years. Early termination of the farmland protection agreement is possible if the State's investment is repaid.

The *Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund* provides low interest loans to construct or improve agricultural facilities. The AMLF is co-administered by the DAFRR and the Finance Authority of Maine.

The *Agricultural Development Grants Program* administered by the DAFRR, is a competitive grants program aimed at encouraging innovative efforts by farmers, aqua culturists and food processors to expand their markets, promote their products and test new innovative equipment and processes.

The *Agricultural Viability Task Force* has a plan for increasing consumption of locally grown products, providing baseline data, supporting farmers' markets and strengthening existing agricultural development programs. Implementation of some task force recommendations is in progress; several other recommendations require additional study and research.

The *Maine Forest Stewardship Program* administered by the Maine Forest Service provides cost sharing for landowners to develop natural resource management plans, conduct non-commercial stand improvements and ice storm-related improvements.

The *Service Forestry Program* provides educational and technical assistance to forest landowners, loggers and the general public to help them make informed decisions about Maine's forest.

## TOOLS TO KEEP FARMS GROWING

Maine farmers, rural communities and towns can employ a variety of methods or “tools” to enhance farm viability and protect farmland. Some tools described below are regulatory, while others are compensatory and/or voluntary. No one tool can make the difference. Instead, it will take the skillful use of existing tools and timely innovation of new tools to keep farmland and farmers growing into the future.

Across the nation, communities making the greatest advances in farmland protection have utilized a combination of tools, including:

- Adopting right-to-farm ordinances that protect farmers from nuisance complaints;
- Educating rural residents and visitors about farm practices;
- Promoting farms and facilitating the development, retention and expansion of farm businesses;
- Adopting farm-friendly land use policies and ordinances;
- Providing property and building tax incentives;
- Establishing purchase of development rights and other incentive programs;
- Coordinating local land use laws with statewide growth management laws;
- Using innovative zoning and subdivision regulations to steer development away from fertile agricultural soils;
- Placing limitations on sewer and water extensions on farmland.

## *General guidance for designing and implementing farmland protection programs and policies*

1. Recognize that agriculture is a primary form of wealth creation and economic development in Maine's communities.
2. Integrate economic development with farmland protection. Keeping farms viable is as important as protecting the resource base essential for farming.
3. Target agricultural and farmland protection initiatives toward blocks of viable farmland to create "critical masses," to support necessary agribusiness support services and infrastructure.
4. Give farmers incentives to protect farmland. Treat farmers equitably by giving them a fair return for what they provide the public, both in terms of priced and non-priced goods and services.
5. Examine the long-term cost effectiveness of incentive programs that compensate farmers for not developing their land to non-agricultural uses. By combining tax, spending and regulatory programs, local communities can strongly support agriculture and balance town budgets.
6. Develop land use policies and ordinances that work for agriculture. Conventional "large-lot" zoning is ineffective because it accelerates residential development and converts agricultural areas into lots that are too small to farm.
7. Encourage inter-municipal cooperation. Since farming spans towns and county borders, farmland protection requires cooperation between towns and among levels of government. Efforts to promote development in one town can derail farmland protection efforts in bordering towns.
8. Develop a coalition of interests to support agricultural and farmland protection efforts. Reach out to non-farmers by organizing farmers' markets, farm events and workshops. Unite the farmland protection interests of farm and non-farm community members by protecting farmland that provides scenic views, includes important water resources, or preserves historic landscapes.
9. Promote thoughtful planning to prevent conflicts between farmers and neighbors.

# STATE PLANNING OFFICE - SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT INCENTIVES

Incentive	Description	Lead Agency	Applicability				Evaluation
			Farming	Fishing	Forestry	Open Space	
I. TAXATION POLICIES							
A. Tree Growth Law	Provides a tax reduction for owners of forestlands that meet criteria set in law. Land valuation based on current use rather than fair market value.	MFS			X		Judged to be a very effective program in keeping forest lands undeveloped and in productive management. (see narrative)
B. Farm and Open Space Law	Provides a tax reduction for owners of farmlands and open space that meet criteria set in law. Land valuation based on current use rather than fair market value.	DAFRR	X			X	Not used extensively. Lack of reimbursement to towns give them little incentive to encourage use of the program, and existing law lacks clear guidelines on use. (See narrative)
C. Forest Management Planning Tax Credit (52 MRSA 5219-C)	Up to \$200 tax credit every 10 years to offset cost of forest management plan for small woodlot owners	MFS			X		Used by a relatively small number of landowners (<250), but has been effective in making forest management plan more affordable for small woodlot owners (and cost to state is small).
D. Sales tax exemptions for recognition as wholesale businesses	Recognition inputs to businesses should not be subject to retail sales tax	MRS	X	X	X		Recent addition of electricity for farming and aquaculture helpful
E. Boat Excise tax	Valuation policy	MRS		X			Current policy regarding length factor favors fishing boats
II. BUSINESS SUPPORT							
A. Right to Farm Law	Establishes presumption of agricultural activities not being a nuisance if conducted according to best management practices.	DAFRR	X				Right to Farm Law revised in 119 <sup>th</sup> , working well. BMP rules being drafted by Dept. (see narrative)
B. Farmland Registration Law	Provides real estate disclosure and adjacency setback protection around registered farms but registration is closed and records are lost.	DAFRR	X				Virtually defunct. Attempt to revise in 119 <sup>th</sup> unsuccessful. (see narrative)

C. Farms for the Future Program	Financial assistance offered for farms to write business plans and receiving academic training in farm operation and economics.	DAFRR	<b>X</b>				Promising pilot program just beginning (see narrative)
D. Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund	This loan program provides funds to construct or improve agricultural facilities and to provide grants for market research.	DAFRR	<b>X</b>				Program has generally been successful. Total program activity from 1997-1999 included 18 projects totaling \$1,384,383 in financing.
E. Agricultural Development Grant Program	This competitive grant program is aimed at encouraging innovative efforts by farmers, aquaculturists and food processors to expand their markets, promote their products and test new innovative equipment and processes.	DAFRR	<b>X</b>				Program has generally been successful. To date, the program has funded 63 projects totalling \$500,000.
F. Agricultural Vitality Task Force Recommendations re in-state purchasing of food products	Plan for increasing consumption of locally grown products, providing baseline data, supporting farmer's markets & strengthening existing programs.	DAFRR	<b>X</b>				Implementation of some recommendations in progress; others require additional study and research.
G. Economic Action Program (USDA)	Matching grants to forestry related businesses, organizations & individuals	MFS			<b>X</b>		Program has generally been successful, but state discretionary funding available has decreased in recent years.
H. Green Certification	This private and non-profit sector program allows landowners and forest product dealers to communicate to consumers that their products originate from well-managed lands.	Private sector			<b>X</b>		Expensive; few clear rewards as yet (private sector initiative)

### III. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A. Maine Forest Stewardship Program	Cost-share for developing natural resource management plans, conducting non-commercial stand improvements & ice storm related woodlot improvements	MFS			<b>X</b>		Programs appear effective. Based on future federal funding.
B. Service Forestry Program	9 MFS field foresters provide educational and technical assistance to forest landowners, loggers and the general public to help them make informed decisions about Maine's forest	MFS			<b>X</b>		Good service delivered within resources available



#### IV. PUBLIC INVESTMENT POLICIES

A. Coastal access infrastructure	Public purchase of piers, wharves, loading areas and parking	MDOT DOC					Through MDOT's Small Harbor Improvement Program and DOC's boat access programs, access has been improved, but new and improved access is needed. (see narrative)
B. Purchase of Development Rights	Primary mechanism for protecting farmland.	LMF	<b>x</b>				Use constrained by lack of matching funds, staff outreach and market forces. (see narrative)

#### V. LAND USE POLICIES

A. LURC Subdivision Law	40 acre exemption of LURC review (see narrative)	LURC	<b>x</b>		<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	Certain exemptions in LURC law allow the creation of lots that evolve into residential subdivisions. (see narrative)
B. LURC General Management District	Agriculture and forestry are supported uses.	LURC	<b>x</b>		<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	Works well except for exemption above. (see narrative)
C. LURC Maritime District	Maritime Development Zone available for working waterfront protection	LURC					Applied only twice at request of island landowners. (see narrative)
D. Growth Management Program	Municipalities must address agriculture, forestry, commercial fishing and wildlife habitat/open space	SPO	<b>x</b>		<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	Technical assistance should be strengthened during municipal planning process; limited by insufficient state resources. (see narrative)
E. State agency review of local forest and agricultural management ordinances	Mandates dialogue between municipality and state agency responsible for resource; reduces burdensome local regulations on farming and forestry. (see narrative)	MFS & DAFRR	<b>x</b>		<b>x</b>		Generally improves dialogue; can create state/local authority conflicts. More technical assistance needed.

# Appendix A

American Farmland Trust • Farmland Information Center Fact Sheets

Glossary

Farmland Protection Tool Box



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## CATALYSTS

Land for Maine's Future Board

## STEERING COMMITTEE & SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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